

El Rey Dancer Faces Lawsuit

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Burlesque dancer Evelyn West, whose name is now in the lights of Oakland's El Rey Theater, may be making another appearance soon — in court.

She has been named in a \$250,000 libel and slander suit filed by Edward M. Skolak, owner of the President Follies Theater in San Francisco, who charges that an article appearing under Miss West's name in a magazine defamed both Skolak and his theater.

Only a few hours before she was sued in San Francisco Superior Court, Miss West dropped a suit she had instituted against screen star Jane Russell. In an action for \$100,000 damages, Miss West contended that Miss Russell was using a dance routine that Miss West taught her.

Miss West was served with the papers in the Skolak suit against her, the magazine and 15 John Does as she appeared on the El Rey stage last night.

REQUIEM IN G-STRING

'President Burlesque' Shuts Its Doors to End an Era

TR 56 OCT 13 1957

An "industry" that deals in strippers and baggy pants comedians slipped quietly into history last night in Northern California.

The dirge was the bump-and-grind music of a band in San Francisco. The official "closing ceremony" was a flimsy piece of garment flut-tering to the stage.

Big time Northern California burlesque died with the last show of the President Follies

at 80 McAllister St., San Francisco. Its owner, Eddie Skolak announced that he was closing the theater because "sex just isn't selling any more."

The closing of the President Follies — following by three months the shutting down of Oakland's El Rey—signals the end of burlesque entertainment in the northern section of the State.

Night club burlesque remains. But both Skolak and

Peter DeCenzie, who was owner of the El Rey, agree that this just isn't the same.

Skolak, with 35 years in show business, said quietly "it's hard to believe . . ." But, he added significantly, he was losing money. He took over the President Follies in 1941 and opened it as a burlesque house. It first opened in 1905 as the Colonia. Then it was the Sa-voy.

Skolak looks nostalgically

back to the days when burlesque rode high—particularly during World War II.

"Losing this house is like losing a mother," he observes now.

Oakland's El Rey closed last July 20 to make way for the new MacArthur Freeway. It was built in the mid 1920s as the Plaza, a legitimate theater, and later a showhouse for traveling shows and an art music house in the '40s.

PROGRESS ITS KNELL

DeCenzie opened it in 1949 as a burlesque house. It functioned as such until progress sounded its knell.

DeCenzie considered moving it to Emeryville, but met with opposition. He said today that some day he may try burlesque again in this area, but not now.

Does the closing of the El

Rey and the President Follies mean the permanent death of the era of scantily-clad girls? Not on your life, DeCenzie declares. "It works in cycles. Burlesque will come back."

Other burlesque houses have died in Oakland and San Francisco.

The Moulin Rouge on Eighth St. here once specialized in burlesque on-the-stage. But that ended in 1952 when the theater turned to filmed burlesque.

BURLESQUE HOME

During 1932, the Premier Theater on 12th St.—now a part of The Tribune plant—presented New York burlesque. It had opened as the Pantages Theater in 1912 as a showcase for vaudeville acts, and went through several names and as many types of

entertainment before it closed.

In the same era, the Fulton Theater at 1518 Franklin gave Oakland pretty girls in as little clothing as possible. The building was later the Franklin Theater, a movie house, and died as such.

Burlesque, in Oakland, in San Francisco and elsewhere, has not been without its difficulties. These have included raids, charges of obscenity and unruly show spectatots.

But Northern California remembers burlesque more than just a show. It lived as an era of dancing girls and bric-a-brac humor that entertained as perhaps no other business did.

That's the way it died last night in San Francisco.

Herb Michelson

Stage and Screen

TR E SEP 6 - 1963

'Don't Forget the First Balcony'

The red-lettered sign in the wings read, "Smile, Even If It Hurts." At the President Follies Burlesque in San Francisco Thursday night they did, and it did.

If you've ever closed anyplace, be it a butcher shop or a dry goods emporium, you know what it's like: Somebody always cries as little; somebody always smiles bravely; somebody always gets tanked; somebody always takes a picture of the old gang, runs around gathering forwarding addresses.

And that's how it was Thursday at the President Follies, the last vestige of Bay Area burlesque and now in the hands of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans) for \$218,350 after an estate sale.

A dozen girls and three comics did their final bits for a packed house of 1,200. Normally, they were lucky to have a crowd of 50 on hand.

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"Night baseball is what's killed it," cracked 13-year veteran Edy Rich, who broke in at Oakland's old El Rey.

"I don't want to talk about it," said Judy Roe.

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She didn't. She did her numbers and then stood in the wings—staring and a little misty eyed.

"Forget the pasties tonight," said one of the dozen gals.

"I always forget 'em," said another.

The three comics—straw-hatted old-timer Higgy King, young San Francisco State grad Don Harris, mustachioed Tony LoCicero—pitched the same old double entendres and got a sympathetic reception.

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Stripper Bobbie Rivers was so nervous she had trouble removing whatever it was she was supposed to remove. Later, she autographed her pasties and G-string and threw them out to the crowd.

Sande Marlow, very pretty, very buxom, very well-received, kept pacing backstage in a knee-length black leather coat. That was it. She smiled, and she said, "This is very sad. A lot of wonderful memories are being washed out." Sande will open soon at a new Burly-Q house in Sacramento.

Some of the others are calling it quits. Brunet Adele Rawls ("Kitten" to the skinheads in the front row) is acting. She ran off after her last shedding and said, to no one in particular, "This has got to be it."

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Inside one of the 6-by-6-foot dressing rooms down a shabby, long, narrow corridor, lanky Laurie Eden (Miss Hollywood) was snapping on her gold lame and telling how much she liked working the President Follies. She's a rising star, has earned as much as \$850 a week for exposing her 35-24-35 form. The President Follies Burlesque had a 30-year past; Laurie has a lengthy future.

"See my white fox," she said to an observer. "Nobody will believe it, but it's authentic."

When Miss Hollywood shivered along the chandelier-lighted runway to the strains of "St. James Infirmary," it was obvious everything was authentic.

"Don't forget the first balcony," said a dozen youths standing there. They stood for the final show's full 85 minutes.

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Nobody forgot the first balcony. All of them performed with that little extra effort. This is an art form to these girls. This is a special kind of theater.

Cathy Carver, widow of the long-time owner and a burlesque singer who's never stripped, faced the packed house (600 were turned away outside) and belted her final song, "I Hurt Much More Than You'll Ever Know."

All of them lined up for the bare-breasted finals. Somebody in the crowd yelled, "Let's Have An Auction." Cathy hummed "It's a Good Day." The curtain flopped down, was quickly folded because it was rented and had to be returned. Miss Hollywood rushed to the airport for a flight to Los Angeles and another engagement. Most of the others headed for a pre-planned wake at the corner pub.

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And Cathy Carver put on her coat and glanced at a sign over a mirror in the wings reading, "STOP—did you rehearse your scenes? If not, do so before leaving the theater."

"Everything seemed to come off all right," punned a fireman opening the stage door for the girls.

That it did when they closed the President Follies Burlesque Thursday night.